



Idaho IBA News

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Premier Issue!

Colleen Moulton, Idaho IBA Coordinator

Welcome to the first issue of "Idaho IBA News". This newsletter is intended to keep you -- our IBA adoption groups, IBA monitoring groups, and local Audubon chapters -- up-to-date on what's happening at your Important Bird Areas!

To be published at least twice a year, each issue will include information on IBA monitoring and conservation activities, as well as pertinent local and national IBA program news. In the fall, the focus will be on sharing results of IBA monitoring activities from the previous spring and summer, including data collected through the IBIS (Idaho Bird Inventory and Survey) program and IBA monitoring groups. In the spring, the focus will be on sharing results from fall/winter monitoring and



Camas National Wildlife Refuge IBA

informing everyone about what's going to be happening in the upcoming spring and summer - and how to get involved! I hope you all find this newsletter helpful, and enjoyable! If you have any suggestions, or information you'd like shared with other IBA folks, please feel free to contact me at cmoulton@idfg.idaho.gov or 208-287-2751.

New IBAs in 2006

Thanks to the work of a local Audubon chapter and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), there were three new IBAs identified in 2006: South Hills, Mormon Reservoir, and Deadwater Slough.

The South Hills, located along the south-central Idaho border, were nominated by Prairie Falcon Audubon for their exceptional songbird diversity, which includes the endemic South Hills Crossbill. Mormon Reservoir, which can be found in the Magic Valley west of Magic Reservoir, was

nominated by Scott Bailey of IDFG for its large California Gull colony and its importance for breeding and migrating shorebirds.

And last, but not least, Deadwater Slough is our first IBA located in the Salmon region. Nominated by Beth Waterbury of IDFG, this location represents an exceptional example of natural habitat that supports many species of concern, including Common Loons and Harlequin Ducks.



**Pair of pelicans
nesting at Black-
foot Reservoir
IBA**

*Find
information
on Idaho's
IBAs, the
Idaho Birding
Trail, and
more at
[http://
fishandgame.
idaho.gov](http://fishandgame.idaho.gov)*

**Young
white-
faced ibis
at Bear
Lake
NWR IBA**



Idaho's IBAs in Cyberspace

Now you no longer need to call your friendly Idaho IBA coordinator (during regular business hours) to find out if your favorite birding spot is an IBA, or what groups of birds can be found at your local IBA. Instead, just visit the National Audubon Society's IBA webpage (<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/>), click on the state of Idaho, and Voila! - you have all of Idaho's IBA site information at your finger tips.

...Cyberspace Part 2

Not to be outdone, we've created our own webpage on Idaho's IBA Program on the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's website. Complete with a map of Idaho's IBAs, IBA nomination and adoption forms, and of course a link to National Audubon's page described in the previous article, this page has just about everything you need to know about Idaho's IBA program. Plus, it links to a bird monitoring page where you can find out more about the Idaho

Bird Inventory and Survey (IBIS) program (including last year's annual report). To get started, go to: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/>, and follow the Fish/Wildlife link to the Nongame Wildlife Program. Click on 'Nongame Bird Program', and you will find yourself with a number of Idaho bird and birding choices.

Psst...the link to the IBA page is on the right under the avocet picture.

Idaho Bird Inventory & Survey (IBIS)

In 2004, IDFG initiated a state-wide, all-bird monitoring program called the Idaho Bird Inventory and Survey—IBIS for short. This program is intended to facilitate coordination among those monitoring birds in Idaho, provide a means to expand bird monitoring to species not yet covered in the state, as well as addressing important management issues (like wetland loss).

So far, IBIS has focused on waterbirds since there wasn't a whole lot going on monitoring-wise for these

birds. And most of our important wetlands are IBAs. So we were able to combine the goals of both the IBIS and IBA programs by hiring wildlife technicians to conduct waterbird surveys at IBAs throughout the state in 2005 and 2006. These first two years have provided a lot of information, some of which you will find on the next two pages of this newsletter. To learn more about the IBIS program and read about the results of the 2005 field season, visit the IDFG webpage described in the above article.

Lots of Water, Lots of Waterbirds

As part of the IBIS program, we have been able to do quite a bit of breeding season (April through July) waterbird monitoring at IBAs over the last two years. The incredibly wet spring we had this year resulted in some big changes at our IBAs. The birds appeared to be a little late returning this year (likely because of the wet, cold



**Trumpeter Swan family
at Bear Lake NWR**

weather), but when they returned, they returned in impressive numbers. Camas NWR saw a literal doubling in the number of waterbirds detected during bi-weekly surveys on the refuge. On average, the IBIS crew documented a 40% increase in number of waterbirds on IBAs in Idaho from 2005 to 2006. They also saw an increase in the number of species on these surveys. Camas NWR saw a 24% increase in species (45 species in 2005 - 62 in 2006), and IBAs in general saw a 10% increase from 2005 to 2006. New species tended to be those associated with deeper water, such as Common Loons and Red-breasted Mergansers. For more information on 2006 results, keep watch for the 2006 IBIS Report on the IDFG website!

Colonies Rebound at IBAs

In 2004 and 2005, gull colonies at Mormon, Magic, and American Falls Reservoirs weren't doing so well. In fact, Mormon Reservoir didn't have a single bird try to nest in 2005. The problem was extremely low water levels in the reservoirs, that left nesting islands high-and-dry, and exposed to predators. This year, however, was a whole different story. Reservoirs were literally overflowing. The result? All colonies were highly successful this year. Gulls not only returned to Mormon Reservoir, but new nesting species came with them! Caspian Terns and Double-crested Cormorants were found nesting on

this island for the first time since Chuck Trost documented them in 1993. Overall, there were 2,244 gull nests (California and Ring-billed), 28 tern nests, and 32 cormorant nests. There were similar numbers of nests at Magic Reservoir. This is a little lower than normal for Magic, but high water made the nesting islands too small to hold the usual number of birds. These birds likely headed to Mormon, or to American Falls, which outdid its previous record of 10, 00 nests, with 13,758 California and Ring-billed Gull nests. Talk about a noisy place to spend your summer!

The Secret's Out

We all know how difficult it is to catch a fleeting glimpse of a Sora or a Virginia Rail. After all, they haven't been labeled "secretive" marsh birds for nothing. So how do you determine abundance, or population trends, for a bird that you almost never get to see? Well, lucky for us, these elusive little birds have some pretty boisterous voices...if you can get them to talk! And that's exactly what we've been trying to do at 12 IBAs around the state for the past two years. Each spring we visit these marshes and broadcast calls (from a portable CD player and speakers) of Soras, Virginia Rails, American Bit-

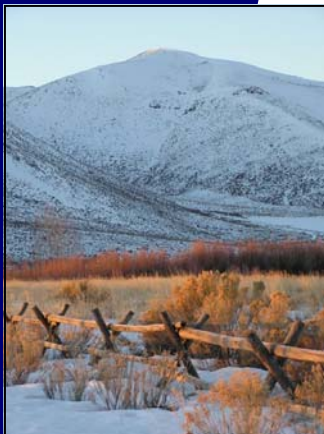
terns, Pied-billed Grebes, and Wilson's Snipe into the marsh, hoping to get a response. As part of a national effort, following a standardized protocol, we are trying to get a handle on where these marsh birds occur in Idaho and in what abundance. And so far we are having great success! For a list of sites we are visiting, and what we've found, take a look at the 2005 IBIS report on the IDFG website.



**Glimpse of a Sora at
Camas NWR**

Why We Count Birds at SCP

Poo Wright-Pulliam, Bird monitor



Silver Creek Preserve IBA

"..it's truly a magical time to watch the area come alive."



It's dark outside and I wonder to myself, "Do I really have to get up this early?" I can hear the coffee brewing...thank goodness, as I stumble into the kitchen for a cup. I'm not a morning person, so how did I become so involved with birds?

When I was asked to help monitor the Silver Creek Preserve IBA, I was thrilled and honored. I had been birding at Silver Creek for a number of years; it was my favorite spot. I was also in the middle of a "Master Birders" class led by Kent Fothergill, which required us to conduct a bird project. Perfect! Silver Creek became my project, but I was quickly joined by my three birding buddies: Dave Spaulding, Kathleen Cameron and Jean Seymour.

We met with Colleen Moulton from IDFG to learn how the count would be done. The survey is a mix of counts at designated points, where we stand for 10 minutes, and a traveling route. We were originally only supposed to count water birds, but we knew there were many other birds around. We got our way, and now submit every bird we see (yes, every

one of them) once a month. Our first count was June 2004...and we haven't stopped since.

Here's why. Visualize a tiny Yellow Warbler darting in and out of a bush near the creek's edge, and listen as you hear the hatchlings chirping for dinner. Hear the cacophony of Yellow-headed Blackbirds, rails and ducks as the marsh awakens with the dawn. See the sun rise gold, pink, and purple over Queen's Crown. As Dave puts it, "It's such a tough job, to get up in the dark and cold...and then see the sunrise, a 4x5 buck, the birds. It's truly a magical time to watch the area come alive." The opportunity to experience a deeper connection to the cycle of seasons and interconnectedness of all living beings is extremely meaningful to Kathleen. Jean is an early riser and just enjoys every moment possible with birds and wildlife, compiling everything she sees. For me it's a time for serenity...and amazement. I call it the "wow factor" because I can't find the words to express it. We do it for science and the birds, but we get back much more...*much more.*

"Last Call" for Nominations

As we move further into the monitoring and conservation phase of the IBA Program, we realize there are sites that are really important to Idaho's birds, but they haven't been nominated yet! Our goal is to complete the nomination process by the end of the year (may be wishful thinking I know!). If you are interested in nominating a site, nomination forms and instructions can be found on the IDFG IBA webpage. A couple Audubon chapters may be working on

nominations already, so check with your local chapter president first. Sites we are particularly interested in include:

- Coeur d'Alene WMA
- Duck Valley Indian Reservation
- Henrys Lake/Flat Ranch
- Island Park Reservoir
- Palisades Reservoir
- Mackay Reservoir
- Sand Creek WMA

Adopt an IBA—I Dare You!

Colleen Moulton, Idaho IBA Coordinator



**Waiting to be adopted...
(Eared Grebe)**

Last winter we launched Idaho's first IBA adoption program, to provide an opportunity for local birders and interested members of the public to get involved in bird conservation. Traveling around the state, I presented this new

program to all the Audubon chapters – and had a great time! For those of you who missed it, or who would like a refresher, visit the IDFG IBA webpage.

Given that we all have a natural dislike for paperwork (although we do seem to like paper shredders), I'm not surprised that I have yet to receive any official adoption forms. BUT, there are plenty of you out there that are already doing the work and I wanted to take a minute to acknowledge you! In no particular order:

- Kathleen Cameron, Poo Wright-Pulliam, David Spaulding, and Jean Seymour – who have been doing monthly, year-round bird monitoring at Silver Creek Preserve for the past 2+ years (see article on page 4), and probably aren't even aware of the adoption program. Sorry guys!
- The Portneuf Audubon Chapter – who hosts a yearly birding breakfast event at Cherry Springs Preserve.
- Lisa Hardy, Kris Buchler, and Couer d'Alene Audubon – who have been doing monthly, year-round bird moni-

toring at Wolf Lodge Bay for several years.

- Charles Swift, Terry Gray, and the Palouse Audubon chapter – who have been leading weekly shorebird birding trips at Mann Lake each fall.

- Frank Renn - who began monthly waterbird surveys at Sterling Wildlife Management Area in Winter 2006.

- Bob Ellis and Lee Sopwith – who began winter waterbird monitoring along the Boise River in 2006.

- Prairie Falcon Audubon – who not only submitted a successful nomination for a South Hills IBA, but have jumped right into publicizing the IBA, working with the US Forest Service to continue protecting important riparian habitat, and working with IDFG to develop a bird monitoring project.

- Kent Fothergill and Zeke Watkins - who conducted waterbird surveys at Hagerman Wildlife Management Area this past winter/early spring.

- There are also several groups out there that are getting ready to start monitoring projects very soon. I'm sure you'll be hearing about them next time!

Thanks again to all of you; if I missed anyone, I will be happy to print a public apology in the next issue.



And if there is anyone out there that would like to take the brave step of being the first to fill out a *GASP* IBA adoption form, they can be found on the IDFG website.

Stories? Pictures? Ideas?

Do you have an ongoing project at an IBA that you'd like to tell others about? Or perhaps you have some great photos of IBAs that you'd like to share? If you do, send them in to "Idaho IBA News"! We would like to keep this newsletter as interactive as possible—a forum for IBA folks to communicate with one another. If you have

something to share, send it to cmoulton@idfg.idaho.gov, or the mailing address on the back page.

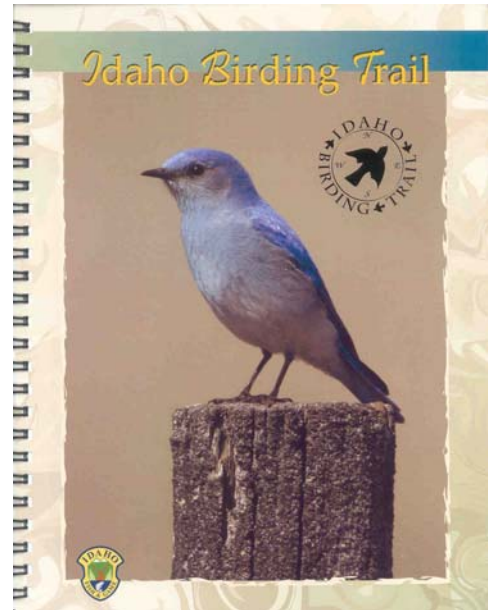
We look forward to hearing from you!



**Swallow nests at Camas
Prairie Centennial Marsh
WMA IBA.**

'Idaho Birding Trail' is Complete!

The Idaho Birding Trail Guidebook is now available for only \$5 at all Idaho Department of Fish and Game regional offices, selected visitor centers and bookstores. This guidebook features 175 birding sites around the state that provide premier bird watching opportunities. Some sites are well-known birding hotspots and other sites are locally identified "secrets" for great birding opportunities. This guidebook includes color photos and maps as well as written driving directions, site descriptions and the best times to bird each area. This guidebook was created by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game with extensive help from local partners, including many Audubon members. For more information on the Idaho Birding Trail guidebook or to find out how you can purchase a copy, contact Sara Focht at sfocht@idfg.idaho.gov or by calling (208) 921-6933.



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Audubon IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS